

January 4, 2009

Natalie Cortez and Andrea Wiley

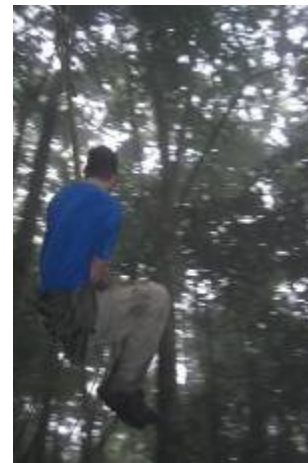
5 ½ hour hike up to the water source

After a nice day of rest from hours of travel, our first full day at Casa Campesina started with a visit from Omar, Morrocho, and Diluvin who were on their way to “the source,” a natural spring that supplies water to Monte Carmelo and neighboring communities, and they invited us along. Anxious to get out and see Venezuela, all of us geared up with our “hiking” apparel (mine consisted of socks and crocs-which was not the ideal footwear for



a trek through the woods) and set out. We walked along the pipe-line to the source, a water way that took three months to construct. These men brought up all the pipes, tools, and the materials for concrete to provide water for the town of 130 families. This is also the water source for the Casa Campesina. A beautiful path in a cloud forest atmosphere, provided a beautiful scenery for what turned out to be a 4 ½ hour hike for those of us who went to the first source, and a 5 ½ trek for

those who ventured all the way to the second source.



Just swingin’

Tired from the long hike through the woods to the first source, Shannon, Glenda, and I decided to head back to Casa Campesina and parted from the group. This part of the journey proved to be the most interesting. Supposedly a faster route to the house, we took the opportunity to head back early-lets just say that easy for Venezuelans means the hardest thing ever for us. Lead by Omar, we marched through mud, crawled under fences, jumped over tree stumps, and visited homes of friends along the way. Omar knows absolutely everyone!

Our Guides:



Diluvín



Omar



Morocho



And us...

Slip, sliding away....

into beautiful views:



Honorio Dam's Talk



After dinner we were joined by Honorio Dam, the local director of rural schools in the municipality of Sanare. He spoke of a course he developed about agriculture for middle and high school students as well as some University students and women. He presents this course as a part of a series of workshops for farmers in agricultural cooperatives from all around the country. During his talk with us he took us through the history of agriculture, proclaiming it to be 'human kind's

greatest invention'. He said we could follow this story through seeds. The variety of crops available in Venezuela goes back to only the late 15th century when the Spanish brought new seeds to the Americas. This is very little time in comparison to the 70 centuries during which farming has been practiced in this area. He also spoke about *Cunucos*, an indigenous term for family garden. A *Cunuco* describes a garden with a variety of fruits, vegetables and plants that survive together symbiotically. We really enjoyed this talk as it provided us with a strong historical background of agriculture in Venezuela that will be sure to come in handy!

Guess Who's Coming to Dinner?

A la Susan



Today Mathias and I made a new friend while the rest of the group made the grand adventure to the land of the clouds and water source with Omar, el Morocho, and Diluvin. Our little friend is known as a *chiguire* and he stayed with us all afternoon – he was such a fine fellow and *bien educado* that we finally offered him a bowl of rice which he cleaned up very well. He greeted the others upon their return and then finally meandered off.



The chiguire is a mammal that lives both in the water (note Cheery chiguire's webbed feet) and on land. Its meat is very rich and tastes like fish. A delicacy, the meat is eaten on Santo Semana in April.